

# Tolling Outreach Overview

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# Where Are We With Outreach?

2006	2007	2008
FHWA value pricing grant	Fall public opinion survey	HB 3096 outreach
	Winter focus groups	Fair & festival outreach
	Winter King County survey	Fall user survey

# Fall '07 Public Opinion Survey

## What did we want to know?

We wanted to gauge public opinion on key transportation issues in the Puget Sound region.

The survey's focus was on two key issues

- Roads and Transit ballot measure and reaction to it
- Public attitudes toward tolling, particularly with respect to SR 520 Bridge

## How was the survey conducted?

- Conducted December 17-20, 2007
- 1200 phone interviews in the three-county Central Puget Sound Region
- Statistically valid responses from King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties
- A subset of respondents from the I-90 and SR 520 “travelshed” (areas where data showed people were more likely to be users of those two roadways) were also identified and surveyed
- Conducted by Strategies 360/Don McDonough Associates

# Fall '07 Public Opinion Survey

## What we found

### What was the electorate mood and key issues?

- Voters were more pessimistic than optimistic:
  - 45% said things *“have gotten pretty serious off on the wrong track”*
  - 42% said things *“are going in the right direction”*
- Transportation is still the highest priority issue:
  - For the state: *Transportation related issues named by 50% of respondents;*
  - *Education was next at 23%*
  - For the region: *Transportation named by 44%;*
  - *Government spending and high taxes by 23%*

### Why did people turn down or support Proposition One?

- Reasons given for why voters turned down Proposition One:
  - Too Expensive - 23%
  - Tax Increase - 21%
- Reasons given for why voters supported Proposition One
  - Need to solve transportation problems - 35%

# Fall '07 Public Opinion Survey

## What we found

### What are the region's top transportation priorities?

#### Top three bridges and structures

- SR 520 Bridge Replacement - 45%
- Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement - 29%
- Expanding Capacity on I-5, I-90 and I-405 - 27%
- Reducing Congestion - 20%
- Need to solve transportation problems - 35%

#### Top three transit priorities

- Light Rail extensions—58%
  - Light Rail to Mercer Island and East King County—21%
  - Light Rail from Tacoma to Seattle—21%
  - Light Rail from Seattle to Everett—16%
- More Buses on city streets, arterials and freeways—47%

# Fall '07 Public Opinion Survey

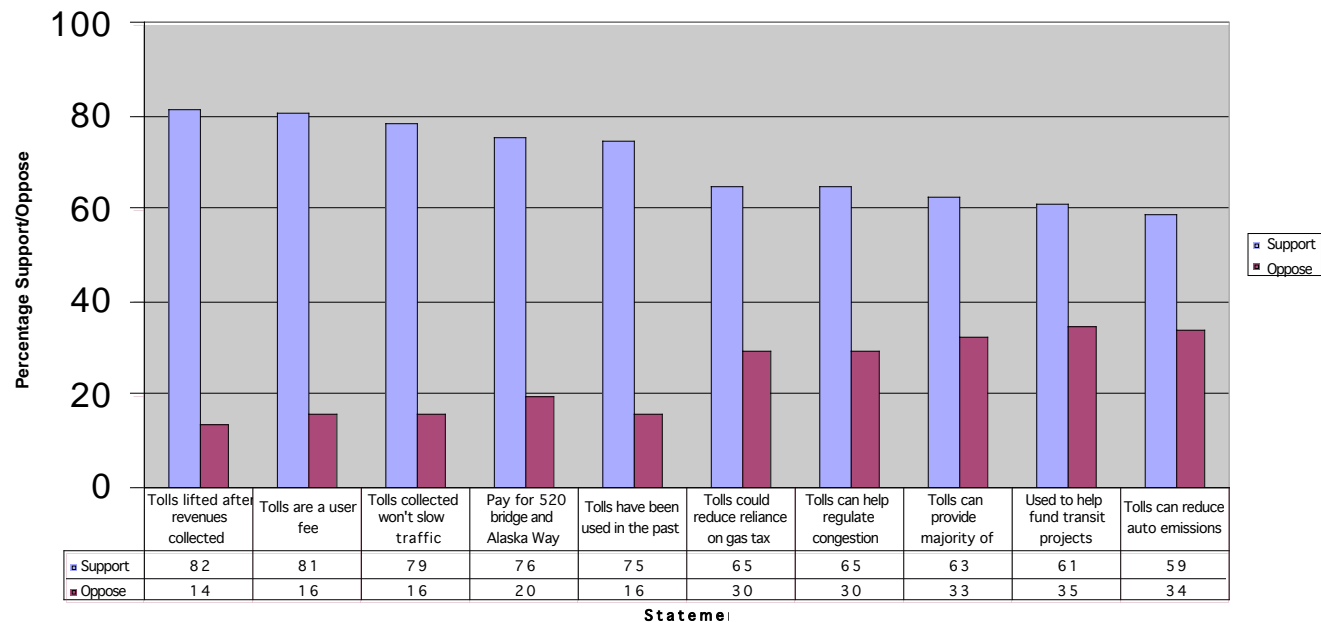
## Support for tolling in general

A variety of arguments favoring tolling were presented to respondents.

Five of the arguments received 75% support or higher, including:

- tolls lifted after revenues collected.
- tolls are a user fee.
- collecting tolls won't slow traffic.
- tolls can help to pay for the SR 520 bridge and Alaskan Way Viaduct.
- tolls have been used in the past to pay for infrastructure projects.

Support or oppose tolls as a way to pay for roads, bridges and transit?



# Fall '07 Public Opinion Survey

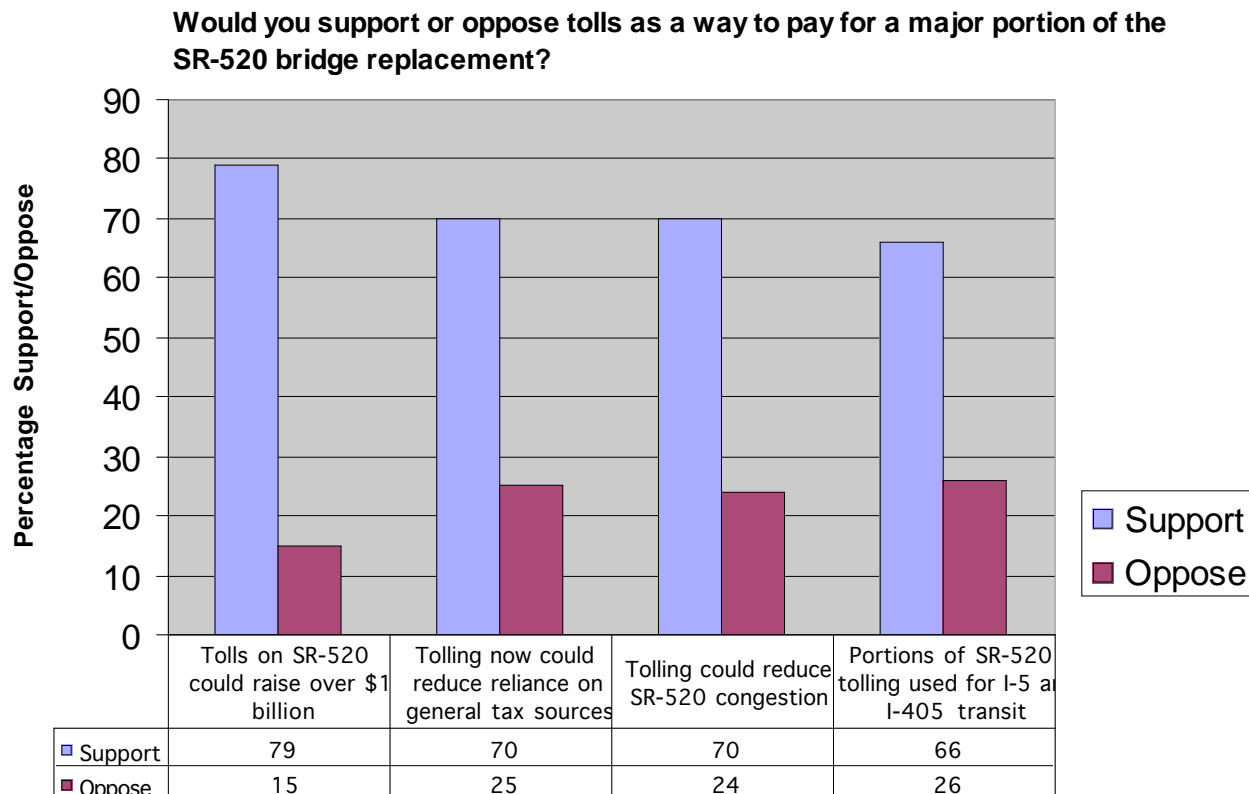
## Support for replacing SR 520 and using tolling

- 63% support replacing SR 520 with a new six lane facility that would include HOV lanes
- 77% support paying for a portion of the SR 520 Bridge replacement project with tolls
- Open ended question asking how much people would be willing to pay:
  - to use the bridge:
    - mean one way toll \$2.22
    - mean round trip toll \$2.37
  - for variable tolls
    - mean amount at rush hour \$2.90
    - mean amount at midday \$2.04
- Toll amounts that are “self-determined” are not a reliable way to identify actual amounts commuters are willing to pay

# Fall '07 Public Opinion Survey

Additional arguments given for tolling SR 520 increase level of support

- Tolls on SR 520 could raise over a billion dollars for its construction.
- Tolling now could reduce reliance on general tax sources.
- Tolling could reduce congestion on SR 520.
- Some of the revenue from SR 520 tolling could be used for transit services.





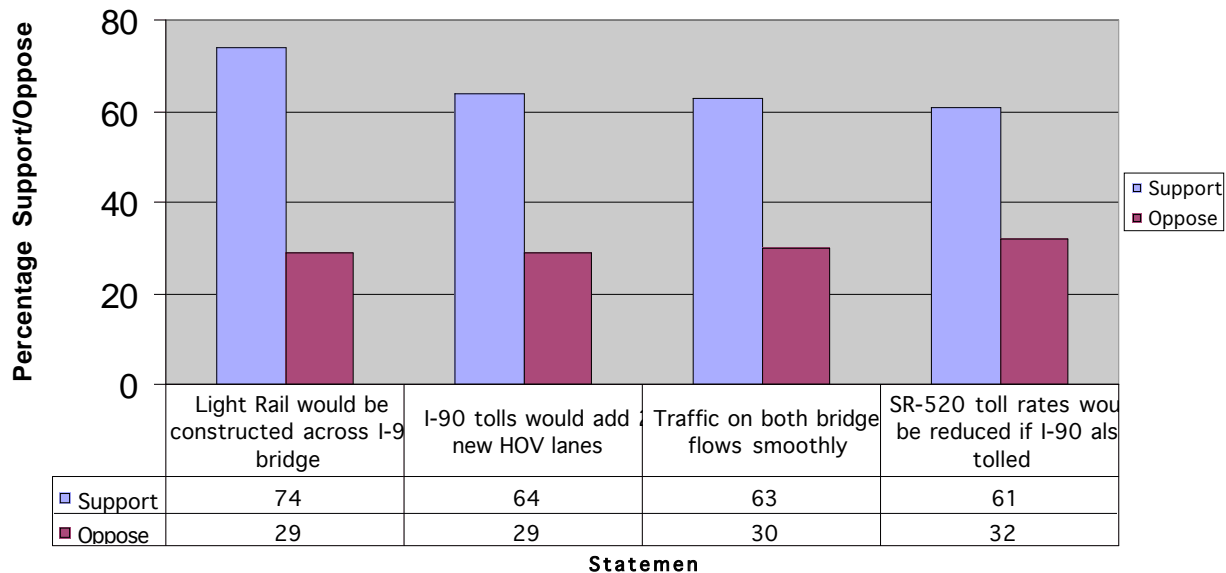
# Fall '07 Public Opinion Survey

General support for tolling on I-90 as a way to deal with traffic diversion from a tolled SR 520

The following arguments used in favor of tolling I-90 were supported as well:

- Light rail could be constructed across the I-90 bridge.
- I-90 tolls could be used to pay for two new HOV lanes.
- Traffic on both bridges would flow more smoothly.
- SR 520 toll rates would be reduced if I-90 were also tolled.

Would you support or oppose tolls on both SR-520 and I-90 bridges?



# Fall '07 Public Opinion Survey

## Support for High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes

### **After the HOT lane concept was described...**

- General support for HOT Lanes on SR 167
  - 55% support
  - 37% oppose
- Support for the concept increases if the HOT lanes could be extended to I-405
  - 59% support
  - 34% oppose

# Winter '07 Focus Groups

We conducted eight focus groups in Dec. 07:

Focus groups took place in North King County, South King County, East King County, and Seattle – two were composed of low-income participants and the other groups were recruited to reflect area demographics.

What we wanted to know:

- Measure focus group participants' awareness of tolling for the purpose of improving traffic.
- Learn how to successfully talk with the public about traffic operations and tolling strategies.
- Identify what moves people to support or oppose tolling.
- Determine opportunities to improve support for tolling with a public engagement program.

# Winter '07 Focus Groups

## What we found:

### **Awareness and acceptance of tolling**

- Participant awareness of tolling is high
- Lack of understanding leads to skepticism regarding tolling all lanes
- Support for roadway tolling depends upon the application
- Lack of understanding leads to skepticism regarding tolling all lanes
- Public acceptance is possible, but not guaranteed

### **What moves people to support or oppose tolling?**

- How tolling affects low-income people
- Having travel options

### **Opportunities to improve tolling support**

- Demonstrate that tolling works
- Show how individuals can benefit
- Emphasize travel options and alternatives
- Highlight the need for tolling

### **Want to view the entire report?**

Please visit our public opinion research page online at:  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability/publications/publicopinion.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability/publications/publicopinion.htm)

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

## What we wanted to know:

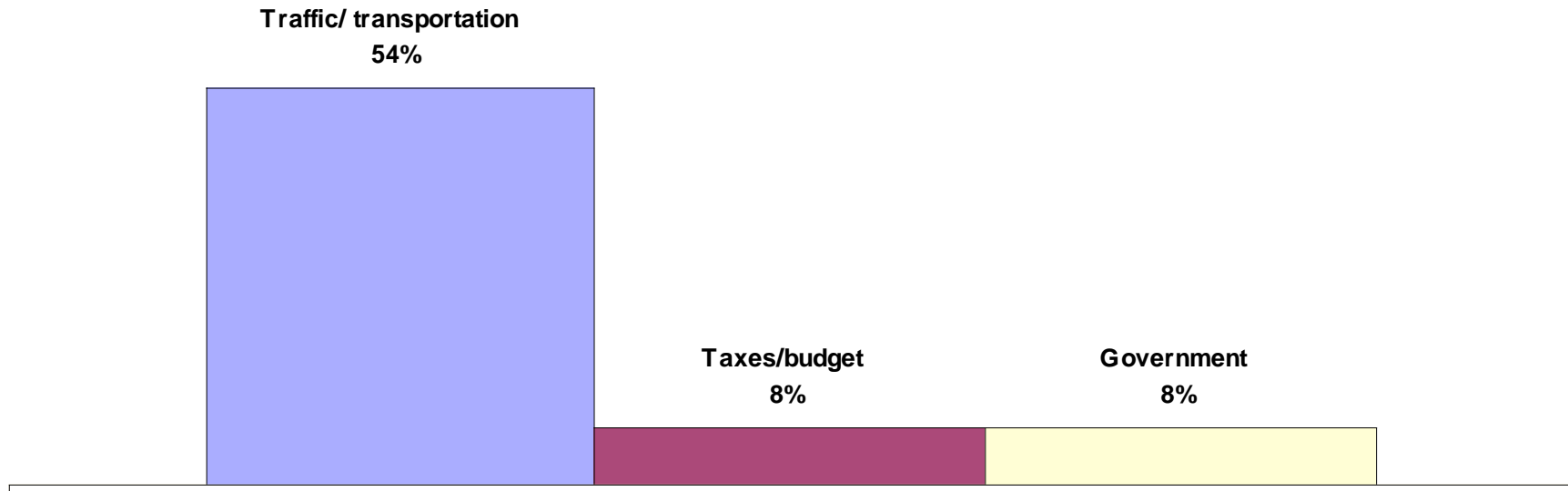
Survey participants were asked several questions including their views on what the key issues in King County are today, what the most urgent transportation issue is and questions about tolling SR 520 and the urgency in replacing the SR 520 bridge.

## Survey details:

- Five-hundred, 15-minute telephone survey interviews were conducted among King County registered voters.
- Interviews were conducted December 15-20, 2007.
- Overall margin of error  $\pm 4.4$  points at the 95% confidence interval.
- Results reflect the voter population distribution in King County.

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

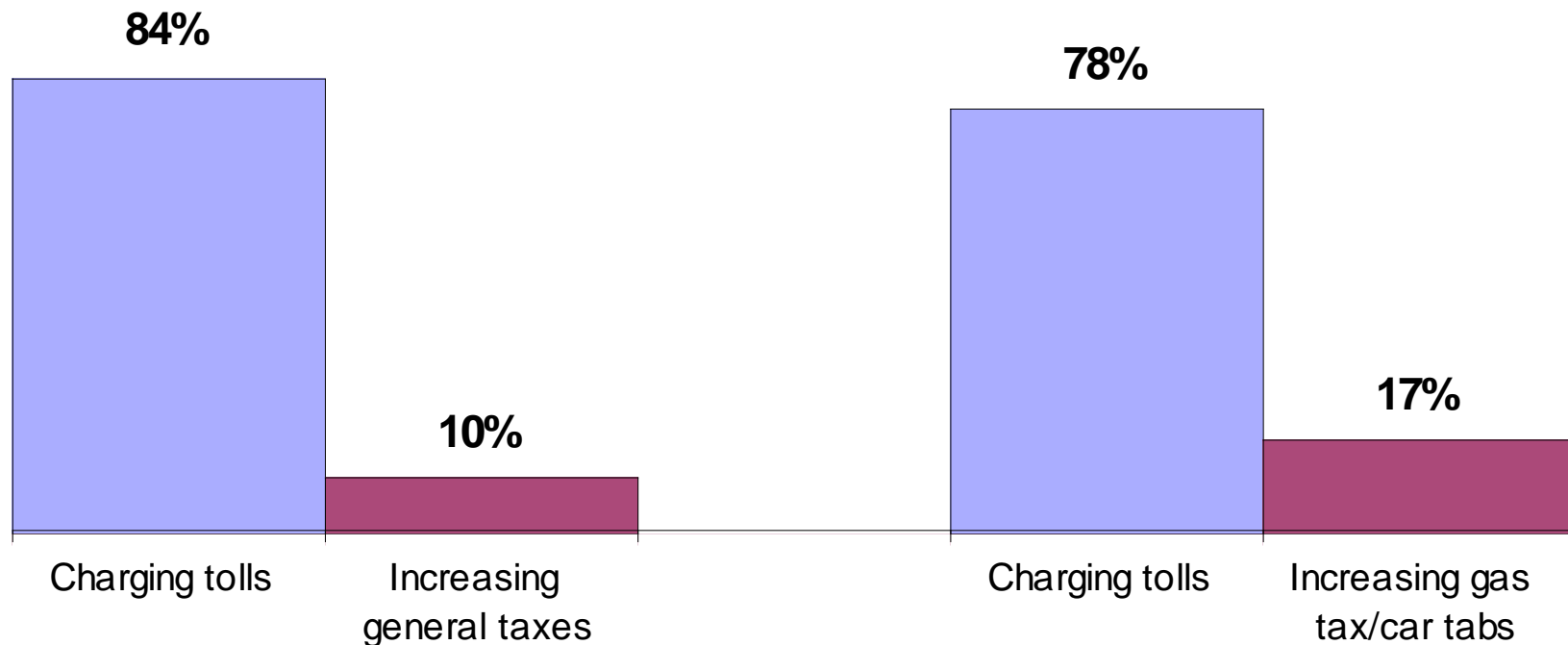
What is the most important problem facing King County today?



***Traffic/transportation continues to be the top concern of King County voters by an overwhelming margin (54% mention).***

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

If the 520 bridge were to be replaced, is it better to fund the replacement by:

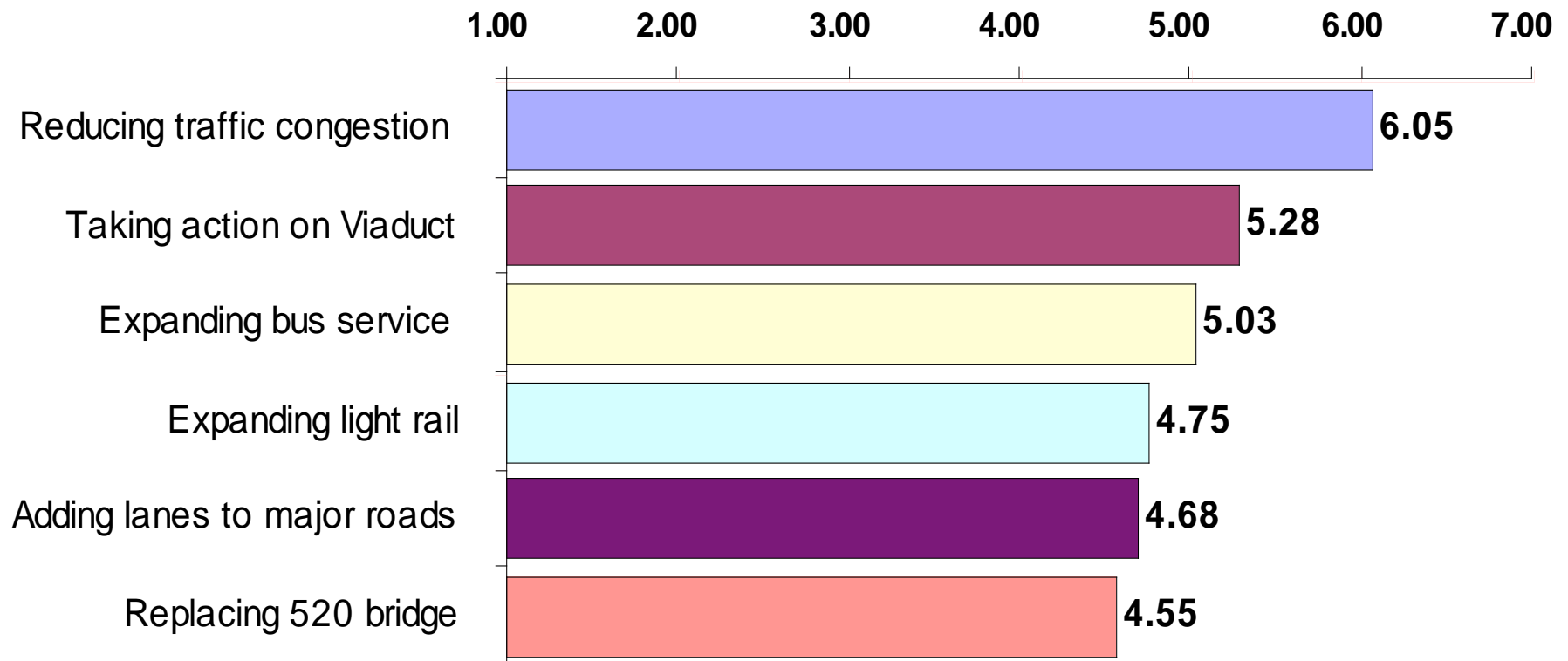


***By a wide margin, voters prefer tolls over general taxes like the sales tax and over vehicle-specific taxes like the gas tax and car tabs as a funding source for replacing the 520 bridge.***

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

What is King County's most urgent transportation issue?

How urgent is it? (1=Not at all urgent / 7=Extremely urgent)

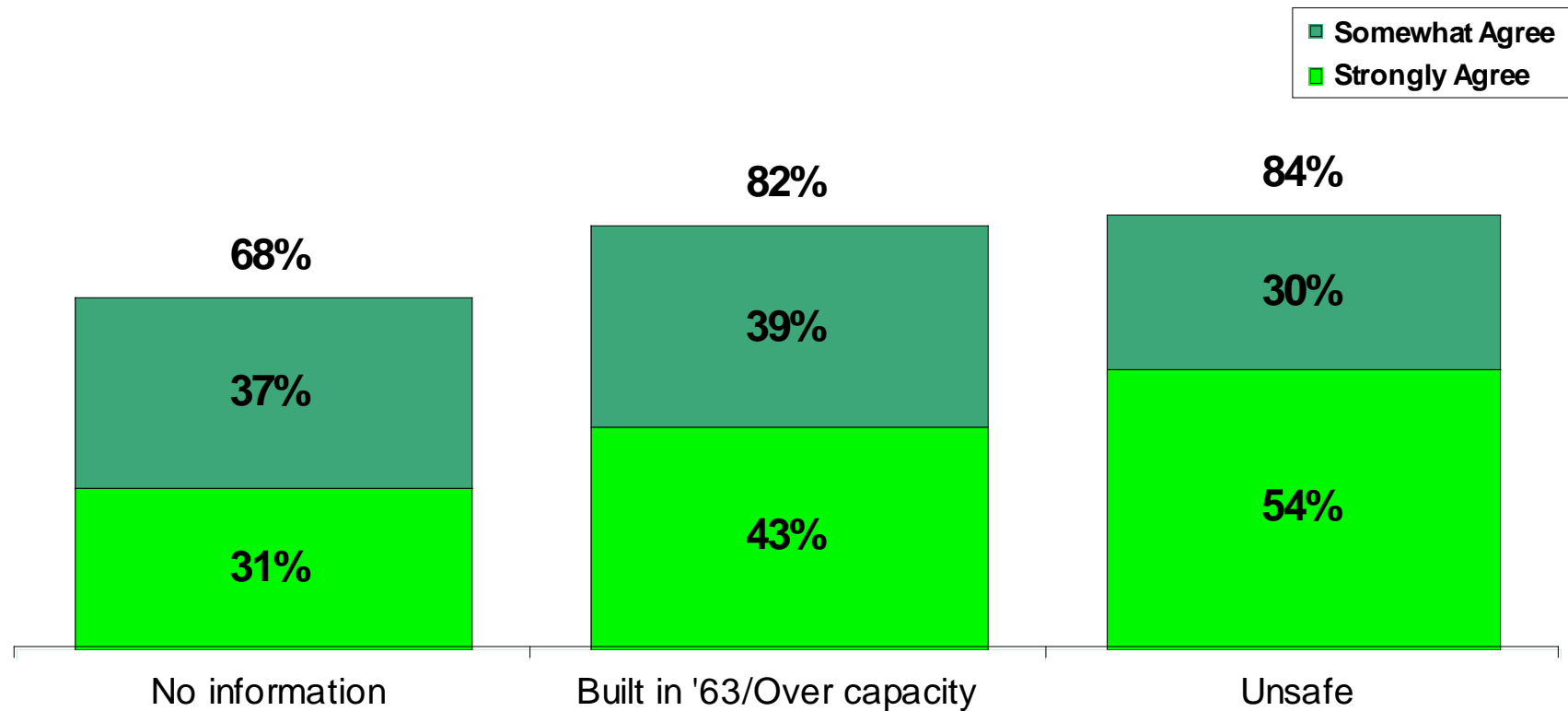


***Reducing traffic congestion is seen as the most urgent transportation issue. A majority (55%) of voters say reducing congestion is “extremely urgent.”***



# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

*Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree that the 520 bridge needs to be replaced?*



***It is not necessary to make the safety argument to convince voters that 520 needs to be replaced. Basic information about 520 being well over its design capacity leads 82% of voters to agree that 520 needs to be replaced.***

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

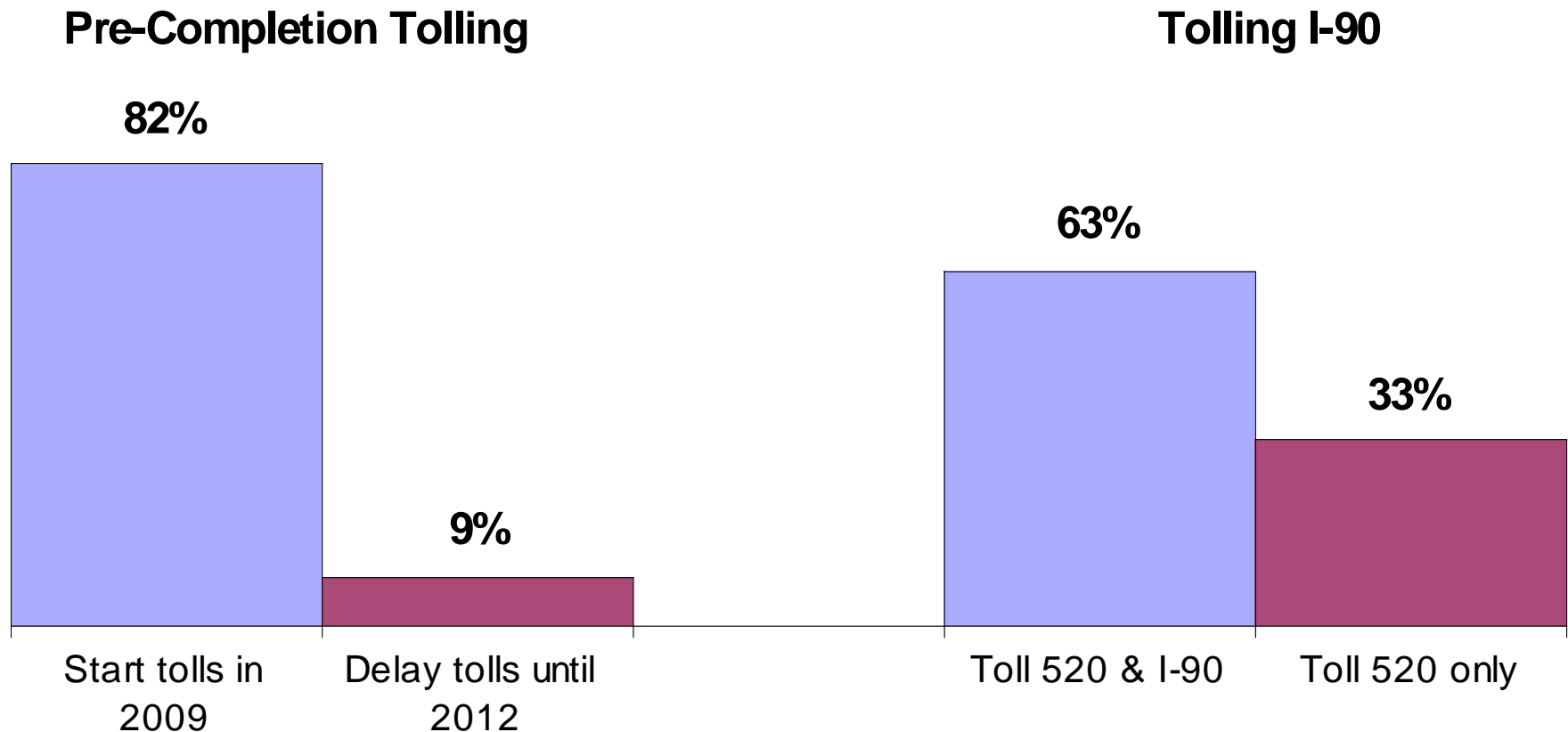
*When thinking of timing the SR 520 proposal, do you think the legislature should:*



***Voters have a strong sense of urgency around transportation issues. Nearly two-thirds (65%) think the legislature should move forward with a 520 funding proposal this year.***

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

*What about pre-completion tolling on SR 520? On I-90?*



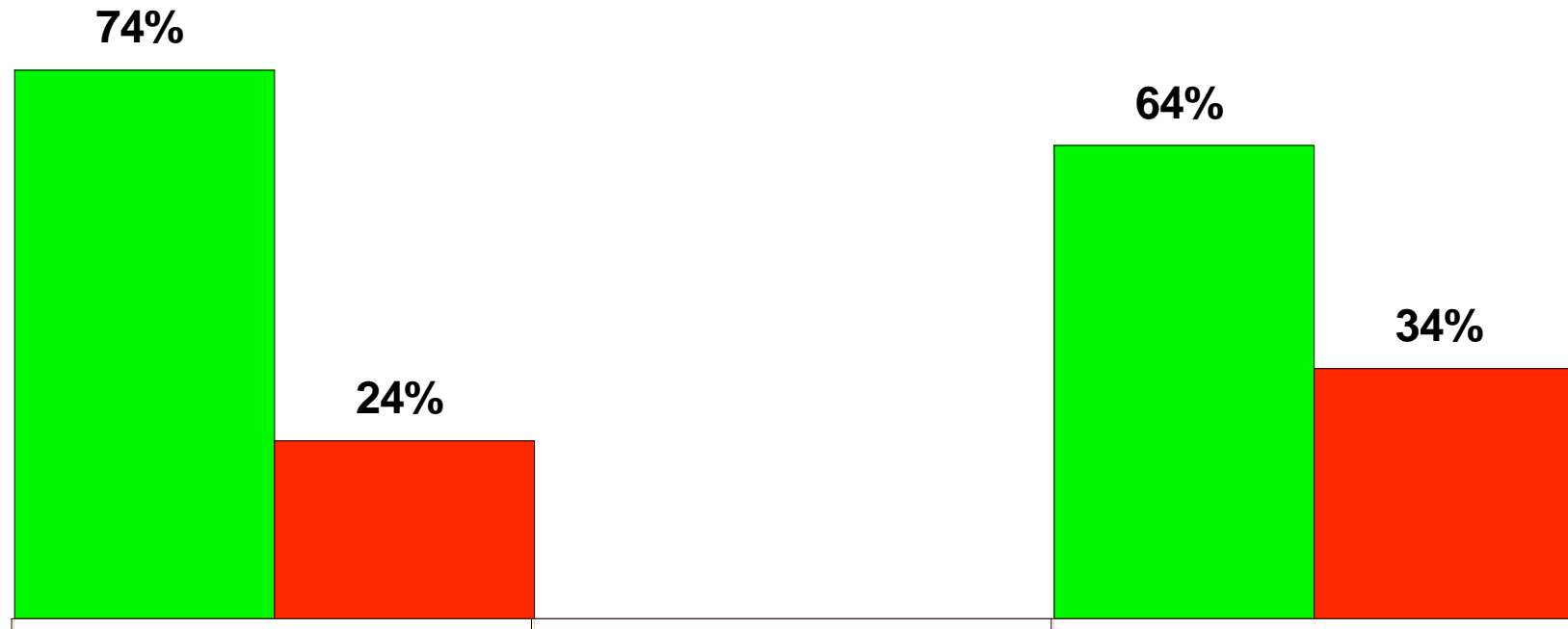
***Voters support pre-completion tolling by a 73-point margin.  
By a 30-point margin (63% to 33%), voters support tolling on  
both 520 and I-90, rather than just 520.***

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

*Including transit and I-90 maintenance:*

**\$4 Toll w/I-90 and Transit**

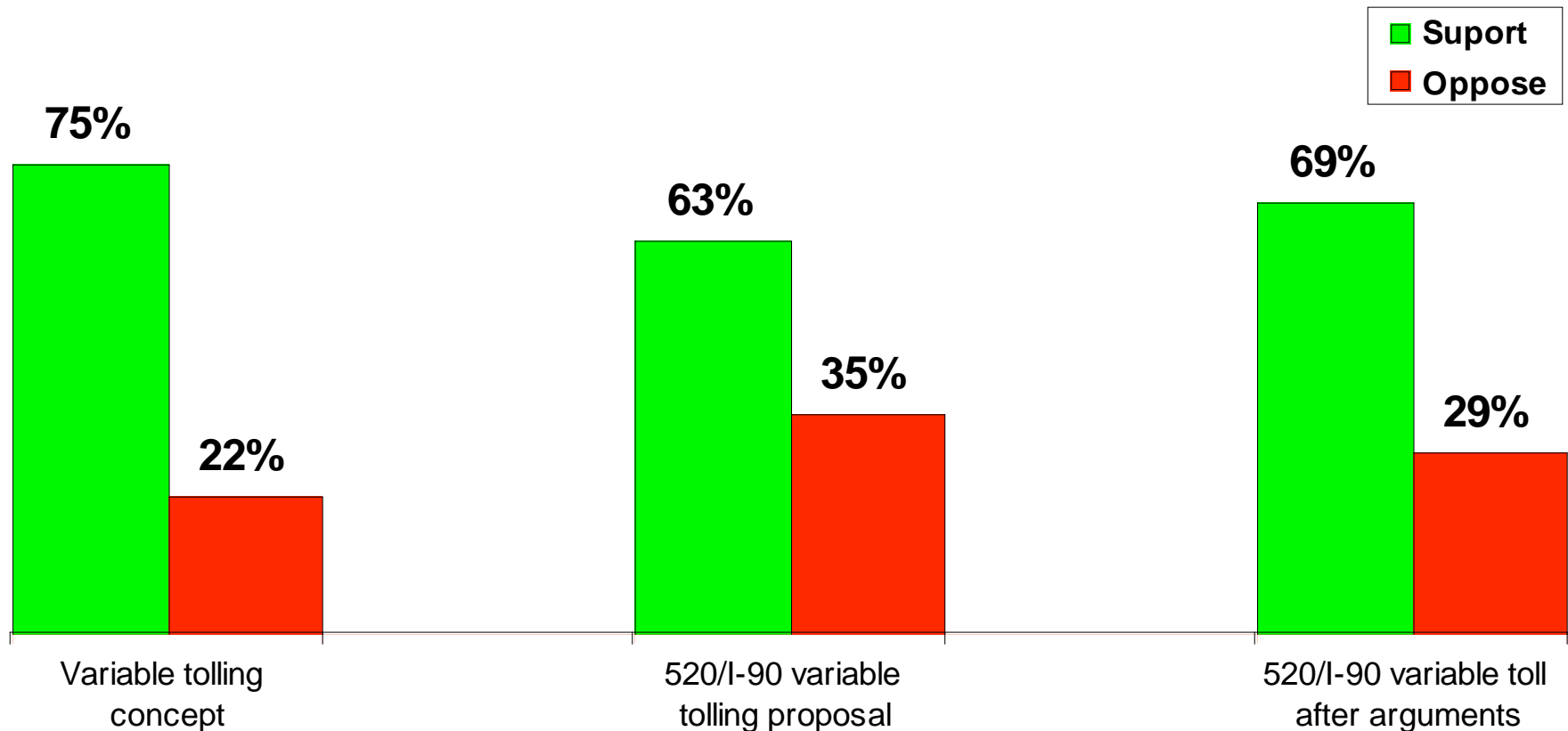
**\$2.50 Toll/520 replacement only**



***Voters prefer a more comprehensive proposal that includes funding for “maintenance on I-90, increased transit and bike investments & new technology to improve traffic flow” over a proposal that has lower tolls but only includes funding for replacement of 520.***

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

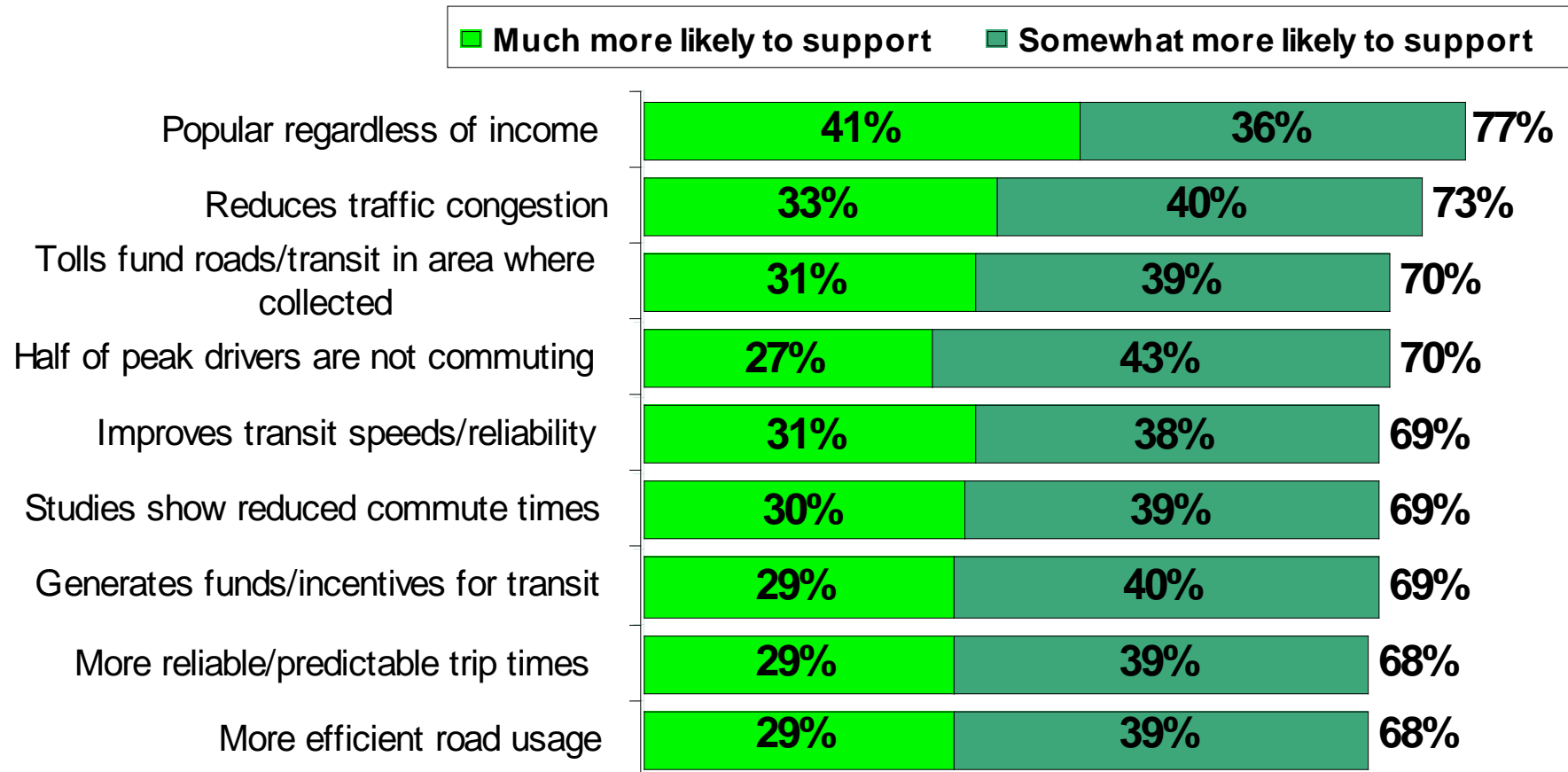
*Variable tolling:*



***There is strong support (75%) for the concept of variable tolling and for a specific variable toll proposal that would include both 520 and I-90, would fund replacement of the 520 bridge, maintenance on I-90, increased transit and bike investments, and new technology to improve traffic flow by implementing tolls that range from \$1 to \$7.***

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

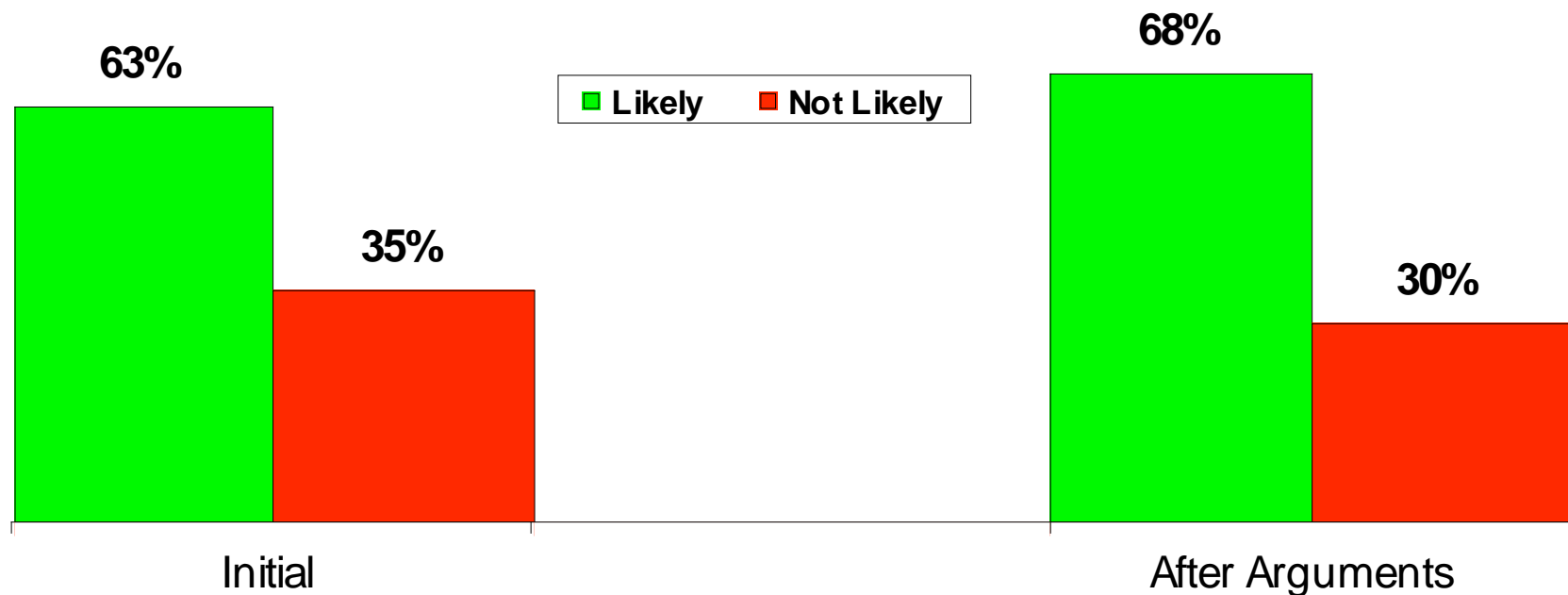
## *Variable tolling messaging:*



***All of the variable tolling messages tested are effective with a strong majority of voters. The most effective messages are: 1) studies have shown that variable tolling is popular regardless of income and 2) variable tolling reduces congestion. 22***

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

**Variable tolling and reducing congestion—  
*How likely do you think it is that variable tolling would  
reduce traffic congestion?***



***Despite voters' limited familiarity with variable tolling, a strong majority say it is likely that variable tolling would reduce traffic congestion. This is particularly important given voters' overwhelming concern about congestion.***

# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

## What we found:

- Voters have a strong sense of urgency around transportation issues.
  - “Traffic/transportation” continues to be the top concern of King County voters (54% mention). Reducing congestion is seen as the most pressing transportation issue (55% extremely urgent).
  - Two-thirds (65%) think the legislature should move forward with a 520 funding proposal this year rather than waiting until 2009 or 2010.
- There is strong support (75%) for the concept of variable tolling and for a specific variable toll proposal that would include both 520 and I-90, would fund replacement of the 520 bridge, maintenance on I-90, increased transit and bike investments, and new technology to improve traffic flow by implementing tolls that range from \$1 to \$7.
- Despite voters’ limited familiarity with variable tolling, a strong majority say it is likely that variable tolling would reduce traffic congestion. This is particularly important given voters’ overwhelming concern about congestion.



# Dec '07 King County Public Opinion Survey

- Initially, two-thirds (68%) of voters agree that the 520 bridge needs to be replaced. Basic information about the bridge's age and capacity increases that number to 82%. It is not necessary to make the safety argument to convince voters that 520 needs to be replaced.
- By a wide margin, voters prefer tolls over general taxes (84% to 10%) and over vehicle-specific taxes (78% to 17%) as a funding source for replacing the 520 bridge.
- Voters prefer a more comprehensive proposal that includes funding for transit and I-90 maintenance over a proposal that has lower tolls but only includes funding for replacement of 520.
- Voters support tolling on both bridges and pre-completion tolling:
  - By a 30-point margin (63% to 33%) voters support tolling on both 520 and I-90, rather than just 520.
  - By a 73-point margin (82% to 9%) voters support starting tolls in 2009 rather than waiting until 2012.

# What's Next?

2006	2007	2008
FHWA value pricing grant	Fall public opinion survey	HB 3096 outreach
	Winter focus groups	Fair & festival outreach
	Winter King County survey	Fall user survey

# Want more information?

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